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The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

SERVING AS **A BEACON OF HOPE** IN SRI LANKA

*"The Lord is my light
and my salvation...."*
Psalm 27:1 ESV

What Does it Mean to Follow Christ in Sri Lanka?

By Floyd A. Brobbel, CEO for The Voice of the Martyrs Canada



Freedom of religion or belief is a constitutionally guaranteed right in Sri Lanka. However, while Christians have a lawful entitlement to gather and worship openly, they also face persecution when exercising this right. Violence in the form of attacks specifically targeting churches, pastors and evangelists – in addition to legal constraints, harassment, threats and hate speech campaigns – are challenges Sri Lankan Christians deal with frequently. Yet, despite these difficulties, churches and mission organizations confidently provide Biblical, theological and missional education/training. As a result, followers of Jesus in this South Asian country enthusiastically engage in church planting and missionary-sending activities.

Opposition in Sri Lanka primarily comes from the adherents of Buddhism, who are often incited by Buddhist monks to resist and combat the faith practices of Christians living among them. Local governments and authorities respond towards those who participate in the attacks against pastors and churches by withholding protection from the victims of persecution and failing to arrest the perpetrators – allowing such devastating acts of violence to continue with impunity. In an attempt to prevent the members of their faith communities from converting to Christianity, the Hindu and Muslim populace also aggressively opposes followers of Jesus who are engaged in evangelism.

For example, one congregation that has faced extreme hostility for their Christian faith is that of the Good Shepherd Church in the Polonnaruwa district of Sri Lanka. Yet, this group of believers continues to faithfully demonstrate Christ’s love in the district by running a drug rehabilitation centre. Despite the church’s endeavours to help many people with addictions, a Christian worker was “roughed up” by two opposing villagers. The perpetrators then threatened to “break the church.”

A few days later, two other church members who worked at the centre were assaulted by assailants armed with iron rods. One of the Christian workers suffered an injury to his head, while the other sustained wounds to his hands. Both believers needed to receive medical treatment in the hospital. That evening, the same perpetrators went to the homes of two other families belonging to the Good Shepherd Church and threatened these believers, demanding that they stop attending the church. Though police reports were filed for each of these incidents, no charges were laid against the attackers.

Christians in Sri Lanka remain resilient because they desire to follow Christ’s example. After all, Jesus Himself submitted to the will of the Father. He did not fail in His duty, nor did He succumb to discouragement. Rather, as God’s laws were written on His heart, Jesus delighted in fulfilling the plans and

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Scripture quotations are from the English
Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

Calendar and "Table Talk" pages,
plus Art Gallery and Retreat ads:
Vanessa Brobbel, Manager of Special Projects
and her creative team.

The goals of VOMC are expressed in our "Ministry Purposes" as follows:

1. To encourage and empower persecuted Christians to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).
2. To give practical relief and spiritual support to the families of Christian martyrs (Matthew 25:36).
3. To equip persecuted Christians to love and win to Christ those opposed to the Gospel (Romans 12:14).
4. To help believers rebuild their lives and Christian witness in countries where they have formerly suffered oppression (Nehemiah 1:3; 2:5).
5. To promote the fellowship of all believers by informing the world of the faith and courage of persecuted Christians, thereby inspiring believers to a deeper level of commitment to Christ and involvement in His Great Commission (Hebrews 13:3; Galatians 6:2).

Spending of funds is confined to board-approved programs and projects. Each restricted contribution designated towards a board-approved program or project will be used as designated with the understanding that when the need for such a program or project has been met, or cannot be completed for any reason determined by the board, the remaining restricted contributions designated for such program or project will be used where needed most. Gifts from individual donors of \$10 and more are acknowledged and receipted with an official receipt for income tax purposes.



The Voice of the Martyrs magazine is the flagship publication of The Voice of the Martyrs in Canada. Published monthly, it is available free of charge and without obligation in one-year subscriptions to anyone in Canada who requests it.

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*"I delight to do Your will, O my God;
Your law is within my heart."*

Psalm 40:8 ESV

purposes of the Father. In other words, God's laws ruled and shaped Jesus' heart, even though He was required to walk a road of suffering in order to fulfil the plan of salvation. Likewise, though suffering for righteousness is painful, Sri Lankan Christians find joy when fulfilling their calling to serve as "salt" and "light," for God's laws are also written on their hearts.

As you read this month's issue of *The Voice of the Martyrs Canada* publication, you will have the opportunity to learn about Sri Lankan culture, read testimonies of our Christian brothers and sisters who daily take a stand for Christ in the midst of opposition, and then uphold them through prayer and other means of support. I pray that you will be encouraged to follow their example by loving your "enemies" – including those who oppose the Christian faith – with a love that flows from God, your Heavenly Father. May you keep His Word securely established within your heart and, as a result, find joy and delight in witnessing for Christ to others within your sphere of influence.

Grace and peace,





A LIFE WORTHY OF THE CALLING

A Christian pays the ultimate price when his witness disrupts illegal trade in a Sri Lankan village.

After a prayer meeting that was held at the Church of Prayer Mission on the morning of December 16th, 2021, Kalithas Selvakeerthi told his pastor, Ravichandran, about an important decision he had made. He was resigning as chair of the community's development committee in order to enter into full-time ministry.

Kalithas cared deeply for the members of his community, just as he cared for God's people as an elder in the church. He routinely checked on the welfare of families in the community and brought food to those in need. Even local Hindu leaders respected his acts of compassion. "Brother Selvakeerthi got many things done for the benefit of the community," says Seelan, a Hindu leader who worked alongside Kalithas on the community's development committee.

Kalithas knew that living out his Christian faith in a Hindu-majority village could carry a high price, but he loved the church and believed in the power of the Gospel to change lives. Acknowledging the risks, he often said, "If the church is open and I am not there, it means I am either in jail or dead."

"A Fisher of Men"

Before coming to faith in Christ, Kalithas had different priorities. As a young man, he made money by selling *kasippu*, a strong liquor, on the black market. He eventually got married to a woman named

Ketheswary, whom he met while visiting a village on business. Yet, those early years of marriage were difficult, for his involvement in the illegal liquor trade led to him battling with drug and alcohol abuse.

One day, Kalithas was confronted by a Christian evangelist, who urged him to leave his sinful lifestyle and place his faith in Christ. Kalithas and Ketheswary understood that following Christ meant not only leaving their Hindu religion and losing the support of their families, but also leaving the lucrative black-market trade. After giving the evangelist's message serious thought, Kalithas placed his faith in Christ and gave up the illegal sale of liquor to become a fisherman.

Kalithas and Ketheswary were the first people in their village to become believers, and they soon began sharing the Gospel and inviting neighbours to come to their house for prayer. In 2001, the couple started the village's first church in their home. Today, the village consists of four thriving churches and about 500 believers.



Kalithas (back row in plaid shirt) was a passionate evangelist and community advocate, as well as a loving husband and father.

Kalithas was particularly concerned for the community's local youth, showing them that life with Christ was far better than a life of addiction to *kasippu* and drugs. Over time, his ministry work had a noticeable effect on black-market trade in the village, prompting threats from disgruntled local dealers.

"He fought to save the young generation from all kinds of addictions," his colleague Seelan explains. "He was devoted to this, and many who were running [the liquor] business were angry with him." Seelan adds that Kalithas once declared that though he might be killed for his ministry work, he would not stop fighting for the hearts of the younger generation.

The Fatal Blow

Religious tensions between Hindus and Christians simmered just below the surface in Kalithas' village, occasionally boiling over in attacks against followers of Christ. Kalithas, however, did not make a distinction between Hindus and Christians when it came to his outreach work. The dedicated ministry worker showed great compassion towards many Hindu families, even those he knew were involved in the black-market trade that he opposed.

After the prayer meeting, at which Kalithas announced his intention to enter full-time ministry, he went home. It was while there that he and his wife Ketheswary were startled by a battering noise near the metal gate outside their home. When Kalithas went to check the cause of the noise, four men broke through the gate and doused him in *kasippu*. They then surrounded him and began to beat him mercilessly. When Kalithas fell to the ground, one of the attackers grabbed an iron crowbar and struck Kalithas

on the head. Before the attackers fled, Ketheswary identified one of them as a man who had recently received a food parcel from them.

Shocked and frightened by the attack on her husband, Ketheswary summoned her son-in-law to take Kalithas, who was unconscious at the time, to the hospital. Doctors eventually concluded that his head wound was too severe to treat. Kalithas, who never regained consciousness, was kept on life support as family and friends gathered to console one another and see Kalithas one last time. He died two days after the attack. "His loss is a big blow to this village," Seelan says. "We cannot fill this vacuum."

Mourning with Renewed Hope

The loss experienced by the members of their village cannot compare with the suffering of Kalithas' family, as Ketheswary now has six children to support on her own while dealing with grief. The Voice of the Martyrs ministry has provided the family with food and helped to cover their living expenses, for which Ketheswary is very grateful. She says that the compassionate assistance they received has given her renewed hope.

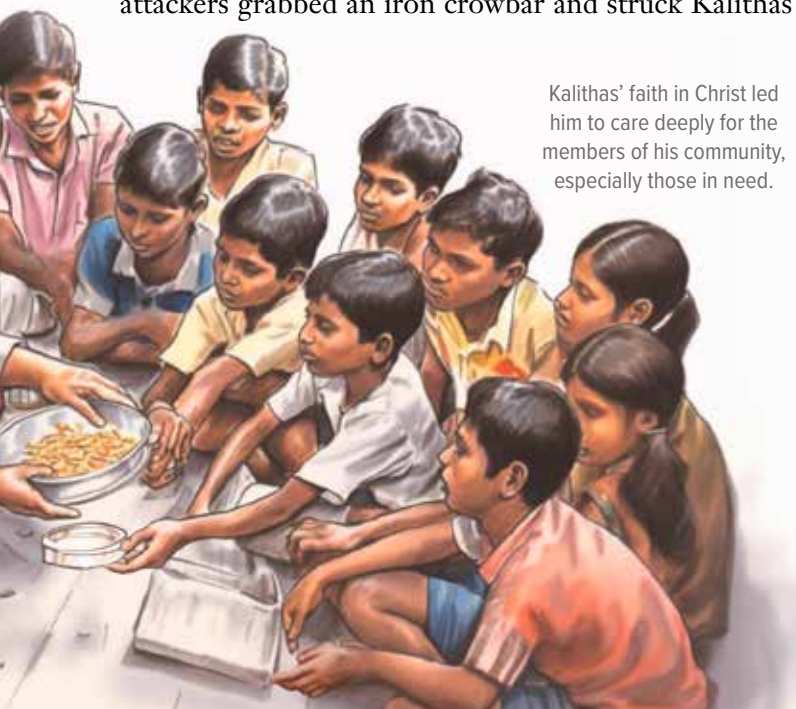
Still, she continues to wrestle with unsettling thoughts, wondering why God had allowed her loving husband to die. And her Hindu relatives have taunted her with troubling statements. "Your husband was killed in a lowly way," they claim. "Are you still going to believe in your God just for the sake of believing something?" In response, Ketheswary has assuredly replied: "I believe in God, and I will meet Kalithas in heaven. I have never considered turning back from my faith nor my God."

While all of Kalithas' children have struggled with a desire for vengeance, a visiting pastor from India has helped them to gain a Biblical perspective. "He taught us about forgiveness," explains Joshuba, Kalithas' eldest daughter. "God helped me to release [the bitterness] and healed me. By God's grace I have forgiven [the attackers]."

Pastor Ravichandran expressed certainty that the life and death of his friend Kalithas – as well as the outpouring of love and support from the global body of Christ – will have a lasting influence on the village. "The community has seen how the Lord has been faithful to this family and taken care of them," he states. "This has opened a door to testify to many of them."

Kalithas' life serves as an example for his family and church to follow. "As a husband he was faithful, as a father he was faithful, in the local church he was faithful..." Joshuba concludes. "My father lived a life pleasing to God before our community, church and family, and he paid a high price for walking in [God's] path. I urge everyone to live a life worthy of the calling." 🌍

Kalithas' faith in Christ led him to care deeply for the members of his community, especially those in need.



KEEPERS OF THE KINGDOM

“Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when [Jesus] had taken him in His arms, He said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.’”

Mark 9:36-37 NKJV

To provide encouragement to persecuted Christian families in Sri Lanka, VOMC supports a special Kids’ Camp project that ministers God’s compassion, care and hope to the children of Sri Lankan pastors who suffer because of their faith. Due to the various global and national crises over the past three years, this eagerly awaited camp had to be postponed in the interim. It finally resumed in the fall of 2023.

When ministering to the children of pastors who endure persecution and marginalization, it comes as no surprise that these young people deal with persecution in their own way.

Christian children in Sri Lanka often face ostracism at an early age. They are not only bullied for their faith in school, but they also encounter further hardships when their parents are forced to deal with police complaints and court cases due to persecution. If not dealt with properly, these experiences can have a significant impact on a child’s emotional/spiritual growth and well-being.

The past three years have been extremely difficult for many families in Sri Lanka, especially those of pastors and ministry workers living within low-income and under-resourced contexts. Soaring increases in the country’s overall cost of living have resulted in families struggling financially – many surviving on the

bare minimum – making the lives of their children that much more difficult.

Due to these challenging circumstances, combined with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic when many were unable to attend school during lockdowns,

children have been forced to mature at a young age. As a result, several of those attending the Kids’ Camp felt conflicted about their beliefs in God and His plan for their lives. Thus, the Kids’ Camp provided opportune moments to help these young people delve into God’s Word, worship together with their peers as one faith community, and culti-

vate lasting friendships with those from various areas of the island.

According to the children, two major highlights of the 2023 Kids’ Camp were the games and the talent show. And despite the rain that took place during the camp season, many of them described their time at the camp as “the most fun they ever had!” Preparing for the talent show presented incredible opportunities for campers who met each other for the first time to bond relationally, while also having fun coordinating wonderful performances of dance and song together.

The hearty meals and comfortable accommodations provided at the camp brought joy to the children, as these practical things are considered rare luxuries to

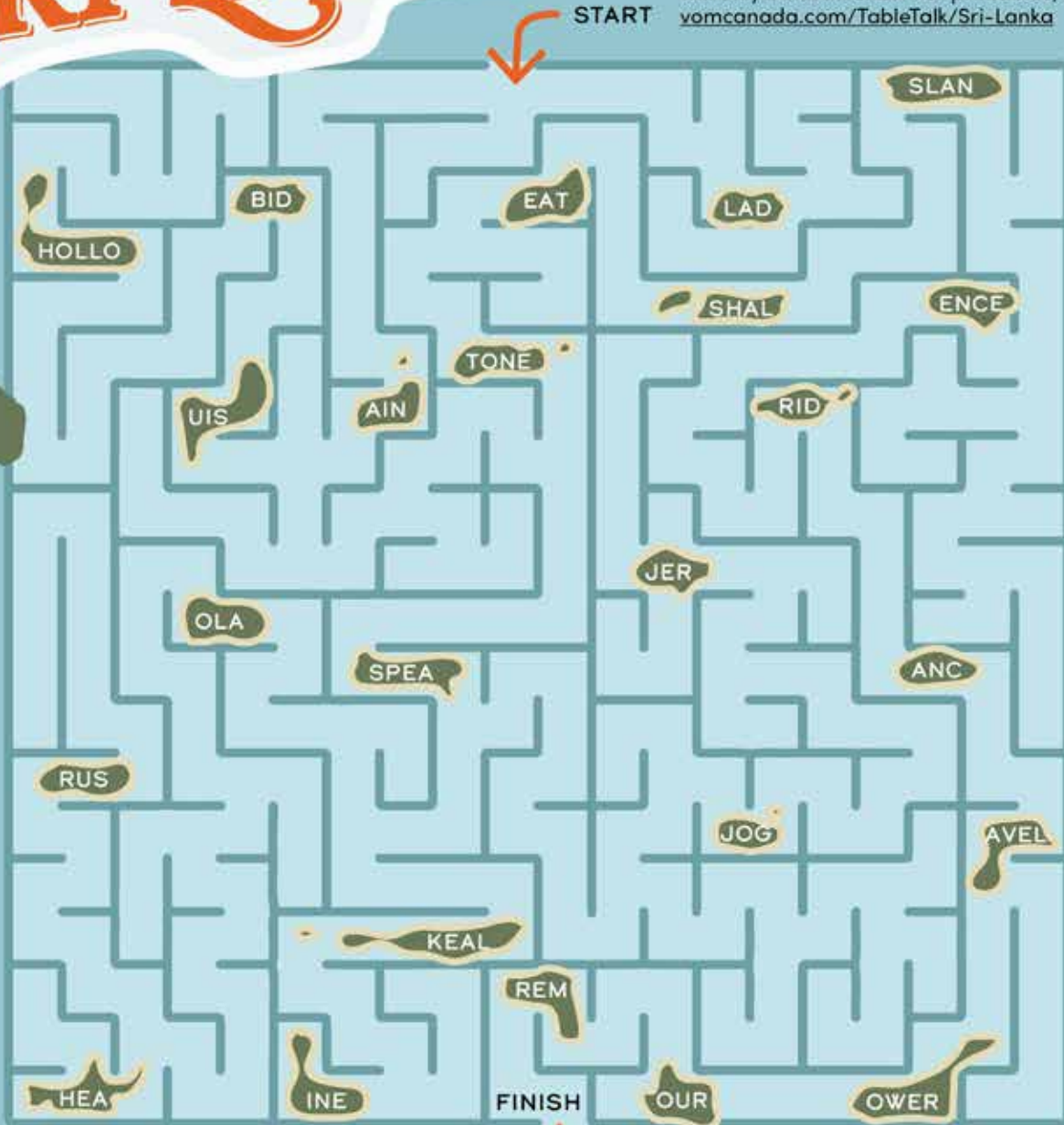


Article Photos: VOM Canada

Table Talk SRI LANKA

THE A-maze-ING BRIDGE BETWEEN NATIONS

How to Play: Follow the maze and collect the scattered word parts along the correct path. Fill in the blanks of the activity text with the missing word parts to complete the story. Beware, any word parts not on the correct route are fake islands and contain incorrect letters! Each word part will only be used once. For printables, go to: vomcanada.com/TableTalk/Sri-Lanka



THE STORY OF THE BRIDGE:

Adam's Bridge is a ch___ of limes___ shoals (naturally occurring ridges of rock sediment) that over time has cr___ed a section of ___ low water between the coasts of India and Sri Lanka. Many of these shoals have formed dozens of small i___ds. Geological evid___ suggests that this natural 48-kilometre b___ge once connected India and Sri Lanka. ___ient records indicate that it was possible to tr___ across the bridge on foot until the 15th century, before it broke up during a p___ful storm. Today, many people visit these shoals for t___ism and religious ce___onies.

IF THE BRIDGE WAS STILL
INTACT TODAY, HOW LONG
DO YOU THINK IT WOULD TAKE
TO CROSS ON FOOT?

"I DELIGHT
TO DO YOUR
WILL, O MY GOD;
YOUR LAW IS
WITHIN MY
HEART."

- PSALM 40:8 ESV



APRIL 2024

HIS WAY

"I delight to do Your will, O my God;
Your law is within my heart."

Psalms 40:8 ESV

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
7 TURKMENISTAN Pray for an intelligence officer whose heart was touched by the Gospel due to the faithful witness of one of his captives.	1 KUWAIT Pray that more Kuwaitis will hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and place their faith in Him.	2 OMAN Pray that isolated Christians who must worship alone will experience the joy and comfort of God's presence.	3 BENIN Pray for new Christians whose lives are at risk due to opposing family and community members.	4 QATAR Praise God that Qataris can access the Bible via the Internet! Pray that many more will be transformed by God's Word.	5 SYRIA Pray that ministry workers who are reaching out to Syrian refugees with the message of Christ will be strengthened.	6 ALGERIA Pray for Berber Christians who continue to boldly share the Gospel in and around the al-Qaida terrorist camps.
14 VIETNAM Pray for Dinh Hoc's family, whose home was burned down because of their faith in Christ.	8 UZBEKISTAN Praise God for Mussalam's faithfulness to the Lord and her courage despite persecution from family members.	9 ETHIOPIA Pray for pastors like Dereje who have faced severe opposition due to their Christian witness.	10 CAMEROON Pray for the protection of Christians living in villages along the northwestern border where Islamists' attacks have occurred.	11 JORDAN Pray for provision, wisdom and strength on behalf of those ministering to Syrian refugees in Jordan.	12 TANZANIA Pray that believers on the island of Zanzibar will have the freedom to worship without fear of reprisal or harassment.	13 COMOROS Pray that Christians who are ostracized by their families will find meaningful fellowship with other believers.
21 BHUTAN Pray that God's Word will spread throughout Bhutan, despite the government's attempts to restrict distributions.	15 SRI LANKA Pray for the training of new pastors so they will be equipped to shepherd the country's growing number of churches.	16 MALAYSIA Pray for the wisdom of Christians who take great risks to illegally share the Gospel with the Malay people.	17 SAUDI ARABIA Pray that great numbers of the Saudi royal family will hear the Gospel message and turn to the Lord.	18 MALI Pray for the release of missionaries who were kidnapped in Mali or brought there after being abducted elsewhere.	19 KYRGYZSTAN For known Christians, jobs and daily necessities can be difficult to attain. Pray that their needs will be met.	20 SUDAN Pray for church leaders who were interrogated and harassed by officials because of their Christian witness.
28 CUBA Pastors in Cuba ask for prayer that they will continue to stand firm in their faith.	22 TAJIKISTAN Pray that Christians summoned for questioning by secret police will experience God's wisdom and guidance.	23 COLOMBIA Pray for Christians sharing the Gospel in rural areas where paramilitary groups have become more active and violent.	24 NIGER Pray that the small number of Christians in this country will faithfully share the love of Jesus with their neighbors.	25 INDONESIA Pray that Muslims in Aceh province will come to realize the harshness of Islamic law and seek freedom in Christ (Romans 7:6).	26 ERITREA The government tracks each Bible sold in Eritrea. Pray that God's Word will flood the country despite restrictions.	27 YEMEN Pray that congregations will continue to worship and steadfastly proclaim the Gospel after attacks.



Scan to access
Digital Calendar

Show Me SRI LANKA

ONE WAY

Meditation is a core practice in the Eastern religions of Buddhism and Hinduism. It takes place inwardly, as individuals attempt to mentally transcend their physical environments to find awareness, peace and tranquility. The adherents hope that such meditation will allow access to their inner goodness and the ability to utilize this in everyday life. Ultimately, the belief is that each person is inherently good, and all they must do is look deep within themselves to unlock their godlike potential.

Biblically, meditation is defined as filling your mind with Scripture and fixing your eyes on God (Psalm 1:1-2; 119:15; Joshua 1:8). The focus is not on an individual's energies, awareness or inner being, but on God – the Creator of all things. The person practising Biblical meditation dwells on His Word and character, recalling all the wondrous things He's done (Psalm 77:12; 143:5; 145:5). Peace, tranquility and freedom for a Christian are not dependent on "self" or natural circumstances. Ultimately, Biblical meditation leads to a closer relationship with God and, as a result, greater dependence upon Him.

WAY OUT

VOMC supports a camp for the children of marginalized pastors in Sri Lanka. This camp allows those living under the stress of persecution to grow spiritually, enjoy fun activities, and connect with others facing similar situations. The project aims to provide them needed emotional support and shore up their hearts of faith, so they can stand boldly for Christ amid hostility. To donate to this project through the *Families of Martyrs Fund*, visit: vomcanada.com

We encourage you to read Hebrews 10:24-25. Set a goal to reach out to three people you know who are experiencing tough situations by sharing acts of kindness and uplifting words. Perhaps you can reassure them of your prayers. Then write about your experiences.

Recommended Reads:

Elly Rose in Sri Lanka by Maggie O'Hara (Early Readers)
When the Rain Comes by Alma Fullerton (4-8 years)

Activity Answers: Chain, Limestone, Created, Shallow, Islands, Evidence, Bridge, Ancient, Travel, Powerful, Tourism, Ceremonies.

WEIGH IN

1. Formerly called "Ceylon," the island nation of Sri Lanka is located near the southern coast of India. In size, Sri Lanka is a little smaller than New Brunswick, yet it's populated with approximately 30 times more people.

2. The Sri Lankan Civil War broke out in 1983. It lasted nearly three decades, ending in 2009. Tensions are still high between the country's two dominant ethnic groups: the Tamil and Sinhalese peoples.

3. The day after Christmas 2004, Sri Lanka was struck by a tsunami that devastated the coastal communities of several nations and killed approximately 230,000 people within a few hours. It was one of the worst natural disasters in history.

4. The government of this Buddhist-majority country has been drafting proposals since 2004 to pass an anti-conversion law in its effort to prevent the Christian church from growing.

1. Elephants are highly respected in Sri Lanka, and the country has laws in place to protect them. The growing wild elephant population is now reaching a total of about 7,000. What problems would likely arise for Sri Lankans if they share their tight island quarters with unchecked herds?

2. For any country that has been divided by civil war, national unity can be shattered. Name a negative impact that a nation might face if unity is absent. Secondly, why do you think national unity is essential to a country's well-being?

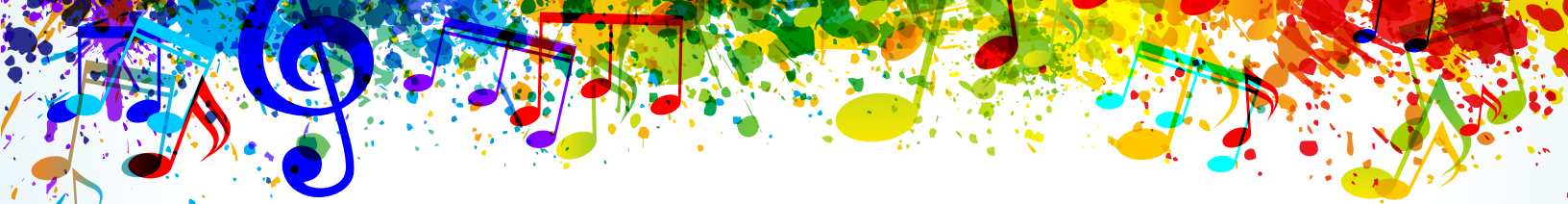
3. After the tsunami, Christians from around the world came to Sri Lanka to help the surviving victims, demonstrating God's love by meeting their urgent needs. Choose five adjectives that describe how those who previously opposed the Gospel had likely reacted to the love and support they received. Defend your choices.

4. If sharing the Gospel or testifying about Jesus to the extent that you do now was illegal in Canada, carrying penalties and fines similar to what is presently being proposed in Sri Lanka (about \$2,147 CAD, along with seven years in prison), would you be at risk?

THE PEARL OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

Sources:

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sri-lanka/>
<https://byjusexamprep.com/current-affairs/sri-lankan-civil-war>
<https://abide.com/blog/biblical-meditation-vs-eastern-meditation>
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www.christiantoday.com.au/news/anti-conversion-law-likely-in-sri-lanka.html



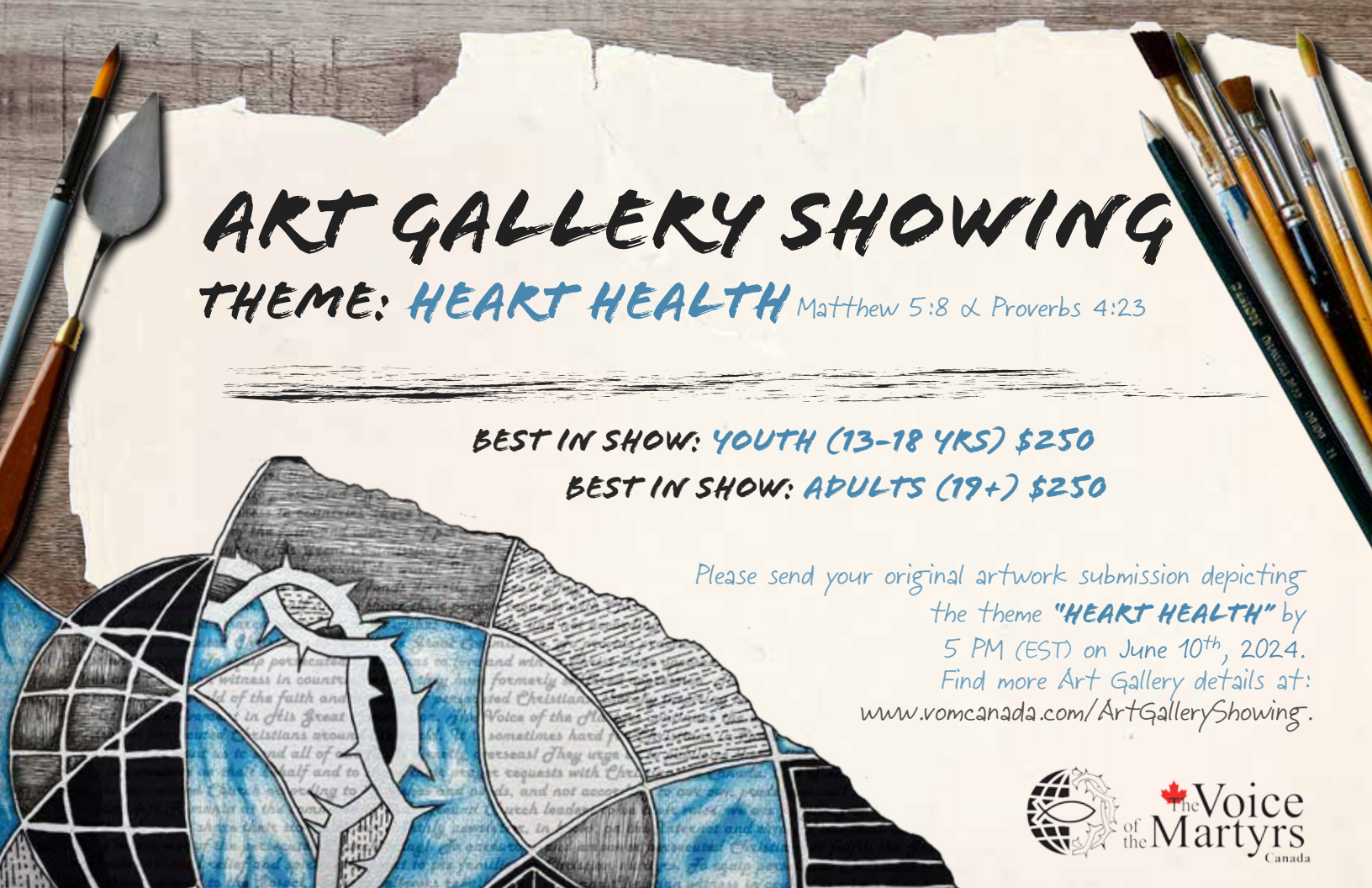
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Sri Lankan families in need. In addition to the children's favourite home-cooked dishes (like stir-fried Asian rice), the offering of breakfast juices – as well as the variety of delicious desserts served during the lunch and dinner times – were especially delightful to them.

On the final day, camp leaders and discussion group mentors, along with other members of the ministry team, had further opportunities to pray for all of the attendees. Let's join VOMC's in-country ministry partners by praying for the Lord to continue ministering to the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of these Sri Lankan children, also asking for His wisdom to be imparted to the workers



themselves as they pour into the lives of this next generation of believers. May all the spiritual seeds planted within the hearts of the children "[fall] on good soil... [producing] a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown" (Matthew 13:8 NIVUK). 🌱

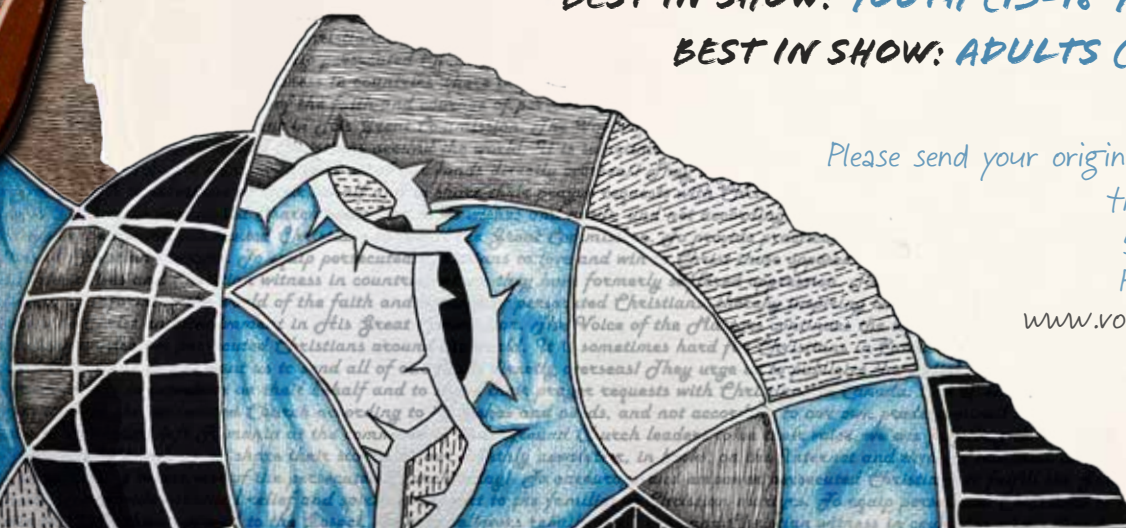


ART GALLERY SHOWING

THEME: HEART HEALTH Matthew 5:8 & Proverbs 4:23

BEST IN SHOW: YOUTH (13-18 YRS) \$250
BEST IN SHOW: ADULTS (19+) \$250

Please send your original artwork submission depicting the theme "HEART HEALTH" by 5 PM (EST) on June 10th, 2024. Find more Art Gallery details at: www.vomcanada.com/ArtGalleryShowing.



The following “Persecution & Prayer Alert” report was initially posted on VOM Canada’s website. To receive the ministry’s weekly postings via email, you may register at www.vomcanada.com/subscribe.



SRI LANKA: Acts of Vandalism Disrupt Pastors’ Convention

Pastors from the Foursquare Church recently gathered at their denominational campground in the Puttalam District of Sri Lanka for an annual convention. At around 1 a.m. on January 25th, a group of unidentified individuals entered the camp and began vandalizing the property.

Windows from four vehicles, including a bus and two vans, were smashed. In addition, a bottle containing gasoline was ignited and thrown into the bus. When conference attendees heard the ruckus and rushed to the scene, the per-

petrators immediately fled the area. A police investigation into the incident was underway at the time of publishing this report.

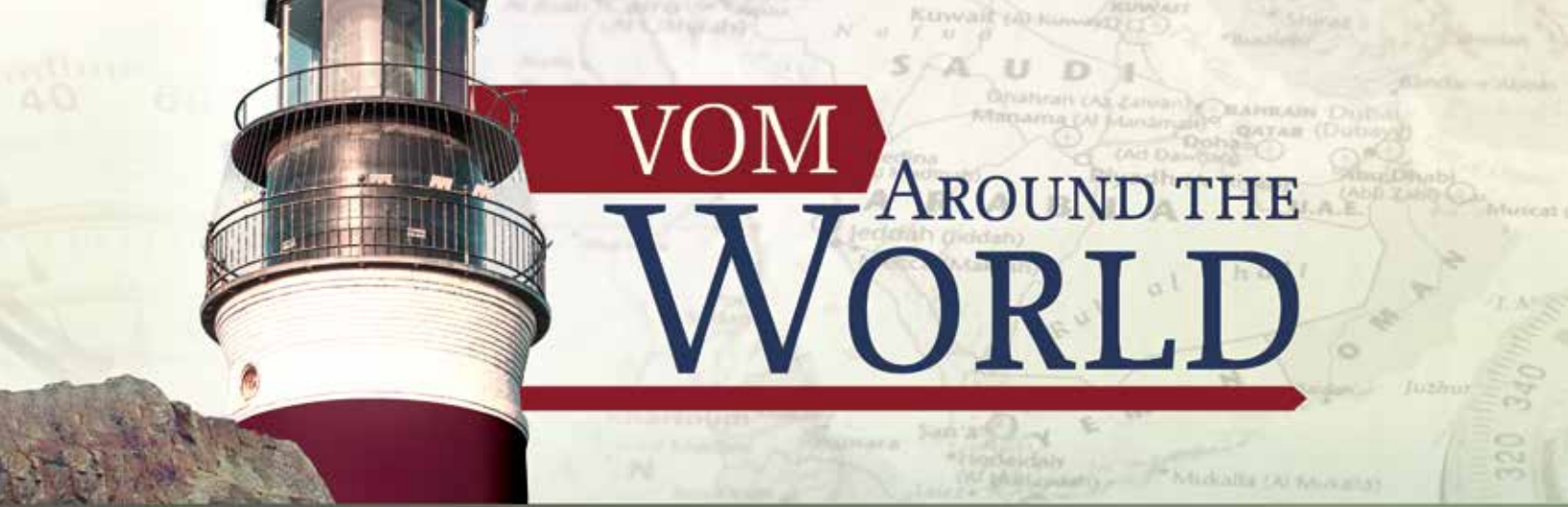
It was not the first time the property has been targeted by militants. During the construction of the camp facility, opponents threw stones at the building site and burned down the workers’ huts. To review

previously posted reports addressing the violence perpetrated against our Christian brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka, you can check VOMC’s online country report at vomcanada.com/srilanka.htm.



Report Source: National Christian Evangelical Alliance Sri Lanka

Pray that these pastors and their congregations will be granted wisdom, as well as the necessary provisions, as they now deal with the aftermath of the vandalism attacks. May the same apply to other Christians in Sri Lanka who have faced similar opposition because of their faith. Ask the Lord to ensure the country's believers are kept safe and secure whenever they gather for worship and teaching, attend conventions, and/or participate in discipleship programs. May these believers receive the practical support and spiritual encouragement they need so they can continue faithfully serving as “lights” amid the darkness around them.



VOM AROUND THE WORLD

NEPAL: Hindu Nationalism on the Rise

In August 2023, a guru from neighbouring India encouraged Nepalese Hindus to follow his country's lead in working to make Nepal a Hindu-only nation. Discussions on social media about his comments then led Hindu extremists to organize a rally opposing a church that was built near a Hindu temple.

The extremists demanded that the church be closed and for all Christian activities to stop. They also demanded legal action against "beef-eaters," a common epithet used for Christians, based on earlier reports that a non-Christian tribal group had slaughtered and eaten cows which are considered sacred among Hindus. Christians feared that the rally would turn violent, but local authorities prevented the event from taking place.

Even though the rally didn't take place, Hindu nationalists in Nepal have continued to take action

against Christians. On August 30th, 2023, three churches in one district were attacked by groups consisting of 20 to 25 violent Hindus. A Christian leader reported that the groups threw rocks and bricks at the buildings – damaging windows, doors and gates. During the attacks, the groups chanted Hindu religious slogans. "The extremist elements have been trying to create social unrest and blame the Christian community," a Nepali pastor states, "even calling for violence on the peaceful and peace-making community."

Despite Nepal's 2015 constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, the nation's parliament enacted a law in 2017 criminalizing any efforts to convert someone to another religion. Since 84 percent of Nepalis practise Hinduism, Christians in Nepal often face harassment, beatings, evictions and other forms of persecution. Please include Nepal's persecuted believers in your prayers as well. 🙏



In their attempts to eliminate Christianity, radical Hindus have threatened the lives of Christians and destroyed the believers' churches and personal properties.

Women's Ministry Retreat Olympic Faith Ontario

Training women in the footrace of overcoming hurdles and standing boldly for their faith in Canada...while partnering to heal, disciple, and equip at-risk Christians with the tools needed to carry out the Great Commission as Christ-centred community leaders.



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2024



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(until March 15th, 2024)
\$200 Regular



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MAY
24-26
2024



\$215 Early Bird
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\$225 Regular



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SCAN TO REGISTER!



The following message has been taken from VOM Canada's devotional book, "From Under the Altar." See www.vomcanada.com/store for more information.

Fully Embracing God's Will

BY GODFREY YOGARAJAH
WEA AMBASSADOR FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*"For to me
to live is Christ,
and to die is gain."*

~ PHILIPPIANS 1:21 ESV

As Christians, we yearn to know what God has in store for us. While we desire His plan for our lives, if we are honest, we will admit to having areas where we would prefer to pursue our own aspirations. Here, we relegate God to being a mere spectator.

The persecuted church warns us to do otherwise. In the face of intense persecution, God's will is everything. It includes being a lifeline and beacon of hope. Persecuted Christians cannot afford to make God a spectator. He must be invited into the centre of all that is unfolding, especially when persecution turns one's life upside down.

In Sri Lanka, Christians ministering the Gospel within difficult rural contexts face persistent persecution. Sister Shiromi and her husband Neil knew this firsthand. Pastor Neil often told his wife that he would die a martyr because of the fierce opposition he faced. Yet, the persevering pastor also declared to his church and family that Jesus would always remain trustworthy to take us through troubles and turmoil. He modelled this daily, fully relinquishing his plans in pursuit of the Father's desires for his life.

On February 17th, 2008, his words came true. On that very day, Shiromi and Neil ended a 40-day fast seeking God's guidance through intensifying persecution. They felt the Lord had renewed their strength and fortified their hearts to stand through whatever would come. That confidence was needed when two armed men turned up on their doorstep. Pastor Neil was shot to death before Shiromi's eyes. In the next instant, she was shot and critically injured. Their son came upon his parents who were

lying helpless in pools of blood. Before blacking out, Shiromi protectively instructed him to go inside the house.

Neighbours rushed Shiromi to the hospital. After being unconscious and on a ventilator for weeks, she survived. Yet, doctors told her that she would never walk again. God had other plans, for Shiromi not only recovered; at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, she picked up her husband's mantle in ministry leadership.

Today, Shiromi leads a thriving church, and has had opportunities to share her testimony around the world. The Lord has taken a widowed woman from a rural town in Sri Lanka and given her a powerful purpose in His Kingdom. Despite opposition and challenges, she is full of faith and joy in God. While Shiromi openly admits to shedding tears over the loss of her husband in quiet moments, the Lord has been her Rock, Fortress and Comforter.

People who endure great difficulties for their faith teach us that God is supremely sovereign. Therefore, we can confidently trust Him while in the centre of His will for our lives. However, the path through this fallen world is not devoid of pain, suffering or hardship. Though the enemy threatens us on every side, God promises to lead us through. His path may not be what we expect, and it may require us to give up what we have. However, a life lived in the centre of His will always results in joy, purpose and glory to our God, as well as an eternal future with no more tears. As Jesus promises, "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25). 🌍



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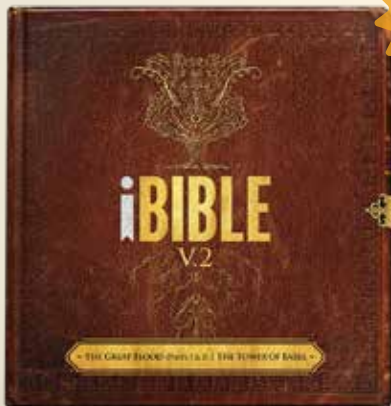


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